

Blood Dancer – The Beginning

The Bar

It was early fall, and what leaves remained were falling in the outskirts of Houston were not colorful, just brown. Fall in Texas is nowhere as beautiful as New England forests at this time of year, thought Boulder.

When a cold front hit at just the right time, the forests came alive with colorful but dying leaves. It was one of the best times of year in that part of the country. Summers could be hot, but almost nobody had air conditioners during his youth. The rest of the year was either cold with snow and ice or otherwise uninteresting. At least in Houston, everything was air-conditioned, and that made the hot weather somewhat bearable.

But the air was cool, unlike the heat of the summer just past, and wearing full leathers was comfortable. The rumble of the Harley Night Train was a welcome feeling, as was the woman holding onto his waist. As big and strong as he was, his wife sometimes left bruises, even though she tried to be careful. When she was excited, all bets were off.

Boulder was a large man with a thick body and muscles created from years in the gym. Not given to fighting because nobody thought it was worth going against him. Besides, he was easygoing and not given to anger quickly. Only threats against family, females, and brothers would arouse his anger.

They were heading to a small kicker bar, the Moonlight Bar, outside of town with a small pack of brothers. They were riding like a club pack, two by two and with groups separated by only 10 feet.

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The back roads outside Houston were rough and patched many times. It made riding in a tight pack dependent entirely on the lead rider to avoid major holes and cracks in the roadway. Everyone behind him followed the man in front of him and had minimal time to take evasive action if the leader made a mistake. Even though they were all independents, they were a group that often road together and thus were comfortable with riding in such a tight formation.

Boulder was riding in his usual front left of the pack, with his brother Spider on his right. Spider was tall, skinny, and had a large head, thus the handle. People often underestimated him because of his size; many have found out, was a mistake.

It was about half an hour before sunset, and the landscape bathed with an orange light with trees and buildings casting long shadows, as were their shadows stretching out in front of them on the road. It was just dark enough that the lights of the bar were visible down the road.

They carefully pulled into the parking lot; although paved, there was a lot of loose gravel. They stopped and backed the bikes up against the front of the bar in the orderly formation, as with everything they did. The bikes were almost all were Evo's, though one was a shovelhead that the owner had lovingly restored.

The others often joked about the maintenance required by bikes of that era. The saying went: "If you absolutely must get out town by sunset, you better be riding an Evo."

The bar was a medium-sized wooden building built shortly after world war II by the look of its architecture. The painted wood had faded into a somewhat brown color. It was pretty typical of country bars in Texas. The dim lights inside the bar did not make it outside through the blacked-out windows. Inside was a worn

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wooden floor, and it was not covered in sawdust as portrayed in many movies.

All in all, it was just a comfortable old Texas bar. It was the haunt of both cowboys and bikers. Texas was an odd place in that respect, that different sub-cultures mixed in the same bars without notice. There was good-natured kidding about the things they threw their legs over, whether it was Horses, Harley's, and of course woman. Any friction or fights were between individuals, not groups of cowboys and bikers.

Before he got off the Harley, his passenger swung her leather-covered body off the bike. Although she made her living as a stripper, she showed no hint of flesh, not from the five-inch heeled boots to the corseted leather cat suit with leather gloves to her elbows. She also wore a black turtle neck that covered everything the fully tinted helmet did not.

Strangers were always startled when Blanche showed up, but Boulder and his brothers and their Lady's well aware of the reason. Though the actual truth was supposedly only really known by Boulder and Spider. She was known to have the XP gene, a fatal variant of xeroderma pigmentosum; it has no known cure. Even a glint of sunlight can cause malignant skin cancers. Thus, the stunning blond is pale white, though she uses bronzers to offset the startling white of her skin for professional reasons.

The other girls have long since stopped being jealous of her, primarily because she never gave any of the men other than Boulder, her husband, the time of day. She firmly but graciously turned down the advances of any man or, in some cases, women who hit on her. And if pushed by someone she could defend herself without any trouble. She was quicker and more muscular than she looked, and she was only five foot two without heels.

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Most of them went inside immediately, except for the smokers. The ol'Lady Red as always had to smoke a couple of cigarettes before going inside. She did not like to afflict her habit on others.

The bar was half full, and the band had not set up. Their group grabbed about five empty tables and shoved them together. Boulder and Spider got up to get three pitchers of beer for the group. While Blanche sat down, she still had not removed her helmet and would not until ten or so minutes after sunset.

She had not always done that until in a dark bar late in the afternoon, someone had thrown a chair through a blacked-out window, bathing the room in the pale sunlight. Boulder jumped on top of her, and she only sustained a slight burn on her cheek. Since then, as a couple, they take no chances. The owner said he was planning to build an inner partition at the back of the bar to protect her. He felt bad that it had happened in his bar.

Once the sun had set, Blanche removed her helmet and took a beer. People rarely noticed that she only took the smallest of sips, and if asked, she just said that the alcohol bothered her condition. She occasionally drank enough to get tipsy, but the other girls reported she got sick and threw it up, so they understood her general aversion to drinking.

The talk was lively, "sea stories" about bikes and parties. All the same sort of carrying on that bikers were famous for in some circles. They discussed upcoming events and who was the best mechanic in the group. The shovel head rider always eventually won that discussion since he spent two weekends a month maintaining the old bike. But they didn't disrespect the old motorcycle too much because it was bored and stroked and fast as hell.

The jukebox was playing, and a group of girls were line dancing to the Cotton-Eyed Joe. In this bar, like most Texas bars, country

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music was generally the norm. Boulder, which nobody in the group understood, liked line dancing. Boulder wanted to join them.

"Just save the last dance of the night for me," she said, "but enjoy yourself, Luv."

After a couple of dances, moving through the choreographed steps with grace not associated with such a large man, he returned to the table and kissed Blanche on the cheek. As usual, he had been the only man dancing. Boulder has a flair for that type of dancing, mixing in unique moves between the standard steps.

Line dancing is generally the property of young women showing off for everyone, especially the men. To Blanche, it was like stripping but keeping your clothes on. It was a little too close to her professional job, which she did enjoy, to be comfortable.

He rejoined the conversation with his friends as if he had never left. She never danced to show off around their friends. A couple of slow dances at closing time is the only time they danced. He understood the reason, but it was still disappointing.

Sometime later, a tall blond woman dressed in leather and metal and all the world resembling a representation of a Viking Princess entered the bar. The bar suddenly hushed, and everyone turned and looked at the door.

"Get behind me," Blanche told Boulder.

"Why?"

Before she answered, with exceptional strength, she used her arm to push him behind her. He stumbled, then finding his feet somewhat stunned.

"That Bitch is mythic," said Blanche.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed.

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"Not sure yet!"

The woman looked around the bar, locked her sight on Boulder, and then her look hardened when she saw his companion.

The two women were momentarily frozen in time, evaluating each other, moments away from making some major decision.

The Starlight Club

Many months earlier, Boulder met his future wife, Blanche.

While not the classiest strip club in town, it certainly was not the worst. But they did not try to exclude Bikers either overtly or subtly. Boulder usually liked to drink quietly and enjoy the beautiful dancers' showing off. Unlike many in the club, especially the young up-and-comer professionals, he did not hit the dancers. He tipped the excellent dancers and drank his beer.

He knew Blanche slightly and always gently declined when she asked if he wanted a table dance. She shrewdly understood he was there to drink and watch pretty girls dance, nothing more. She would say later that she found that attitude quaint and somewhat charming.

He would say that most of the girls in the club were money-seeking missiles; long, sleek, fast, and dangerous. But he loved the ones that liked showing off when dancing, not the dead-eye ones that did not like what they were doing. He tipped the former and rarely the latter.

When entered in tonight, the club was only half-full. Boulder grabbed a stool at the bar, and as usual, ordered a Bud from a waitress and settled in for a couple of hours. He noticed Blanche was sitting with a rather rough-looking guy at a table on the far side of the room.

He did not pay much attention to it at the time as Robin was dancing at the time. She truly loved dancing almost naked and got off on it. He was sure she would dance nude if it were allowed. When Robin finished, he gave her a five without trying to stuff it in her g-string. She took it with a slight smile and, as always, found him somewhat odd in a good way, as did most of the

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dancers. A couple of them would jump his bones if given the slightest chance, but Robin was happily married.

Over the next hour, he watched the dancers and tipped the ones he considered worthy. He was somewhat surprised when Blanche came up next to him at the bar and ordered a whiskey. He assumed it was for the customer she had been sitting with at the back table.

"Hi, Boulder; how are you doing?" Blanche asked.

Boulder looked at her and saw her smiling at him, "Just fine darling."

"Do you mind if I hang here for a couple of minutes? The guy I am with is a real asshole, and I need a break for a while," Blanche asked softly.

Boulder nodded and smiled. They spent the next couple of minutes with good natured sexual fencing, both knowing it was going nowhere. They both enjoying themselves when her customer came up and grabbed her by the arm, and jerked her around.

"Bitch you don't take my money all night and hang out with a dirty biker!" He says in a nasty gruff voice, "What is he, your pimp?"

Boulder slid off the bar stool in a smooth motion and stood towering over the foul-mouthed man. "Take your hands off the lady," Boulder growled menacingly. His fists were closed, and his body stance was somebody who was moments away from hurting someone.

"Lady!" the stranger growled, "now I know you are her pimp!"

At that moment, Blanche stepped between them and turned her back to Boulder.

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"I was waiting for the waitress to bring your drink," she insisted. "I barely know this guy; let me get your drink, and we will go back to the table," she said as she turned to pick up the drink that had just arrived.

She caught Boulder's eye as she picked up the drink and mouthed silently, "It's OK."

Boulder turned back and sat on the stool at the bar and ordered another beer. He did, however, keep an eye on the table where the dancer was seated. He knew it was her job, but nobody should have put up with that kind of abuse. It did not sit well with him.

It was crystal's turn on stage, and she was another one that liked what she did. But, somehow he could not enjoy it and kept his eye on Blanche. It wasn't his business, but the guy's attitude pissed him off. It was near closing time, and he noticed that her table was empty. He guessed that she was going somewhere to have sex with the man. He hoped not, but it was not his business.

Boulder paid his tab and tipped the bartender and the waitress, and left the club. He had parked his bike behind the club so as not to be a temptation for thieves. The bouncer kept an eye on it as well as the cars in the back lot. The front parking lot was mostly empty and only dimly lit. He turned right after exiting the club and walked around the building to the back. The back lot only had minimal lighting. His was parked in the shadows some distance from the back door.

Just then, Blanche came out of a back door with the creep she had been sitting within the bar. He again wrongly assumed there was going to be a quick oral job in the car. Boulder was thinking of leaving, but it could turn into a bad situation with that ugly little man. Who thinks he deserves anything he wants. He had his hand on clamped her upper arm again. Almost like he was afraid she would bolt before getting to the car against the back fence.

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For reasons he could only vaguely understand, he decided to stay in the shadows and watch what was happening. He thought it was none of his business, but men who abused women bothered him. He did not tolerate it with his bothers or any others, and if done in his presence, he often interceded.

He almost pushes the girl into the passenger side door and then came around to the driver's door and got in. If they drove away, he would let it go. Before the dome light went out, he roughly pulled her to him. When the light went out, he could not see what was going on; he waited. Just then, there seemed to be a struggle going on in the car from the sound of it. That was enough, he thought, I am not going to let a girl get abused.

He slowly approached the driver's side from behind, and as he comes up to the driver's door, he was shocked to see Blanche biting the guy's neck. When she saw Boulder, she lifted her mouth off the man's neck; there was blood on her lips. He immediately backed off and turned to leave. He was almost at his bike when Blanche suddenly appeared in front of him out of nowhere. Her sudden appearance startled him.

"Boulder, you did not see anything," she said while staring him directly in the eye.

"You do not have to worry; I will never tell anyone," he said evenly as he calmly studied her.

"What did you see?" she asked while looking at him very carefully.

Boulder paused to think before he answered; no matter how this went down, there could be some nasty consequences. What he saw was out of myths and legends that nobody believed anymore.

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"Blanche, I saw you bite his neck and draw blood, possibly drinking it."

"That is unfortunate!" she answered. "If I can not make you forget, we have a problem. I do not understand why you can remember; I can look people in the eye and make them forget."

"I can not help there, is there going to be a problem?" he asked.

"Boulder, I can not have someone who knows my secret walking around!" she stated firmly.

Boulder immediately senses this situation just got extremely serious, deadly serious.

"Well, I guess you will just have to become my girlfriend so you can keep an eye on me!"

Blanche just looked at him, not believing what he just said. A moment later, she busts out laughing.

"You think that is the solution to this problem?" she finally got out.

"It works for me," he said thoughtfully. "But you can also count on your secret being safe with me. Is he going to be alright?"

"Yes, a little on my blood on his wounds and telling him just had a wonderful time. He is driving away right now thinking he is a stud," Blanche said, still studying him.

Boulder looked at her calmly and said, "Again, are we going to have a problem?"

She did not say anything for a moment, and he continued, "who would believe any this? I am just a stupid biker after all."

Blanche looked at him and made a decision. "Nobody who knows you would call you stupid, but let me go change clothes, and you can take me for a ride."

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"Do I have a choice?" he asked.

"Of course, I have decided to trust you, but I have always wanted to ride on one of those things, cool?"

Boulder nodded and leaned on the seat of the bike, and waited for her to return.

The Ride

She emerged ten minutes later in tight blue jeans, a sweater, and a jacket. She was delighted that he waited, and it eased her mind about the decision she had made. She never dated customers; in fact, she hadn't dated anyone or anything in something like 40 years.

"I thought Nike's might be better than five-inch heels."

Boulder smiled. "Some girls wear hi-heels all the time; it works."

"Alright, I will remember that. Do you have a place for my bag?" she asked. She looked at the bike in the shadows, "how do I get on the bike."

Boulder took the bag and used bungee cords to attach it to the rack on the back fender.

"First, you are going to put on my helmet. Then come here and let me put your foot on the peg; you might miss in the dark."

Balance chuckled. "For me, this looks like daylight; just point to it," then adding, "what are you going to wear?"

"Just my hard head," then Boulder proceeded to instruct her. "I will get on first, lift it off the kickstand, start the Harley, then you put your foot on this peg right here, and just swing your leg over the seat and settle in behind me."

Boulder started the bike, and she mounted without a problem. "Once we start moving, keep your arms around my waist. Several other things, when I stop, do not put your feet down. Second, lean

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into corners with me; moving in the wrong way makes it difficult to drive the bike."

"No problem, let's get going; I only have about five hours before I must be in bed." She paused, "Before you say anything, I sleep in a bed!" Blanche said in an amiable manner.

"I'm not going to touch that," Boulder replied.

He carefully pulled out of the club parking lot, not telling what a drunk in a car would do. Was he was clear of the club, he turned up the next main cross street toward I-45. He thought a ride to the Woodlands and its tree-covered scenery would be a nice change from the club scene.

There were still older roads to places that developers had not yet taken over; however, they were disappearing under the city's relentless growth. The country used to start north of the 610 loop; then it was the Beltway, and now it was north of the future loop, highway 99.

A hundred years from now, maybe sooner, Dallas and Houston might meet somewhere on Interstate 45.

He was headed for an old country park that small-town locals frequented. It had a small lake and beautiful trees. It smells like fall this time of year, but the evergreens stayed green and were intermixed with skeletons of trees with their foliage almost completely stripped. It created a near-winter tableau rarely seen anywhere but the untouched areas in the country beyond the cities.

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The rapid expansion of Texas cities is destroying these areas at an ever-increasing rate. It was sad, he thought, how long until this park became a vast apartment complex surrounding the lake.

He pulled up to the road, looking down on the lake, and parked. After they both dismounted, he asked. "What do you think?"

"It is beautiful, Boulder," she almost whispered, "but I see it much differently, maybe in a more profound way."

Boulder cocked his head like a dog trying to understand what its owner was saying. She thought, what a delightfully odd and interesting man. She had never had a relationship with a human who knew what she was and accepted her without any reservations. He just accepted that she was what she was and made no judgments. But he was obviously interested in her point of view of things, though he did not press her to explain. But she willingly did explain what she saw.

"I see so much more now, not just visible light. I can see the down to the infrared, heat primarily at night and well into the ultraviolet spectrum. For example, you are almost glowing beneath your jacket, and the animals are visible to me that think they are hiding in the bushes, for example," she said as she watched for his reaction.

He looked at her and smiled. "So there no way to run and hide from a girlfriend like you when you get mad?"

"Damn Skippy, so be a good boy!" she said with good humor, "but who said I was your girlfriend?"

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"I did not say you were my girlfriend; I simply was exploring the possibilities and the consequences."

"I always did like smart men," Blanche said seriously, again impressed by this man. Shortly after that, they started back toward the city proper.

At about four o'clock, as Boulder was at a stoplight, he said, "Shall I drop you off at the club so you can get your car?"

"No, at my house, my car is in the shop. One of the dancers gave me a ride into work today," and she gave him directions to a slightly older sub-division in north Houston.

"No problem, but please don't hold on so tight; I will probably have bruises tomorrow!"

"Sorry, but this was exciting and fun," Blanche explained.

He followed her directions till he turned into the small sub-division. Blanche's house was a neat four-bedroom house set on a one-third acre lot. The sub-division was built before developers downsized lots in the seventies to pack in more homes. He pulled up in the driveway and stopped.

Blanche smoothly dismounted and put her hand on his shoulder. "Would you like to come in?" she asked.

Boulder smiled. "I don't know if that would be a good idea; let's just keep as friends for now."

Blanche handed back the helmet, "You chicken?"

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"Damn right, have a good day darling, I have your number," he said and rolled the bike backward and then turned toward the street.

She smiled and waved as he rode away. What an exceptional man, she thought. He was not scared of her, but he was understandably reserved. Some simple things impressed her; he had wished her a good day, knowing that was when she slept. She was going to have to take him to bed the next time she had a chance.

Girlfriend, she thought, now that was worth thinking about, she had not had a boyfriend forty years and never a human who knew what she was. Besides, she was looking forward to riding that Harley in the future.

It was the best time she had in a long time. A little sex certainly would not spoil things

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The Call

Boulder did not call or come to the club for three days. For the first time in forever, she felt like a girl after a first date, and the boy did not call back right away. Now, as a beautiful lady, this is an unheard-of result. She was at some level annoyed and, on another level, respected Boulder for his reserve. He was not afraid of her but also went to some effort not to push her. Again, she thought what an attractive man for the umpteenth time.

It was late afternoon on Thursday when he called. She was waking up when the cell phone rang on her nightstand. A small lamp on a side table dimly lit the room. From the outside, it looks like there are regular windows. But a wall separated the windows and her room. The whole house was full of false walls to protect her from sunlight. She had one bedroom and fully furnished as a living room with automatic lights and occasionally music to give the illusion of a standard household. It was essential to provide the impression from the outside that it was an ordinary house.

These precautions were more than necessary. An errant suspension could cause Blanche trouble that might unravel her life or worse. Nothing has occurred in the last 100 years or so in this country, but the danger is always there.

Only a very few people had her number, only her boss and a couple of other dancers. It did not occur to her at the time that it would Boulder.

"Hello," she said.

"Hello, Blanche," Boulder said over the phone, "I didn't know what time to call you Are you awake?"

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"Barely, what can I do for you," she said sleepily.

"Would you like to go out tomorrow night? There will be a rally and party on Saturday, but tomorrow night, the people entering the brisket contest will be cooking all night. There will be a bunch of people not cooking also. I thought it would you would like an all-night party." Boulder explained over the phone.

"Where is it?" She asked.

"The party is at a private ranch just past Pearland, which is south of Houston." He said expectantly, wanting her to say yes because he was hoping she would come.

"Yes, I would like to go," she said as she sat up in bed and threw off the covers. She was already thinking of the things that she would have to set up. "I know you can handle my bag, but do you have an extra helmet with a heavily tinted visor?"

"I will have one ready for you; what is the earliest you can leave from your house tomorrow night?" Boulder asked.

"Be here about 7:45 pm; I'll have about ten hours before I must be home."

"I will be there at 7:45, and I am looking forward to it!" Boulder stated firmly.

Blanche immediately started planning for the trip. She would be a long way from safety and would have to plan carefully. Blanche already had several full-covering catsuits, and the leather one would be most appropriate. She already had perfected the cover story of being a victim of the XP gene that made the Sun deadly

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to its victims. A tinted helmet should be OK even if they get caught out in the Sun.

Now, she thought, "where are those boots with the 5-inch heels?"

She sat down on the sofa in her actual living room and had a small glass of blood, which she bought from a blood bank contact, then watched the afternoon news show and got ready for work. Her boss was not going to be happy that she was skipping Friday night and possibly Saturday night.

Shortly after eight o'clock, she loaded her work bag in the passenger seat of her 5-year-old Chevy, which had been returned by the shop that afternoon. She opened the car with her spare key. The shop had locked the other keys in the car when it was delivered.

She had enough money to buy any vehicle she wanted, but that would attract attention and possibly thieves. She left her subdivision and turned left onto W. Montgomery Rd, heading toward downtown. A left turn onto E. Tidwell, and she was at interstate 45. She was at the club 15 minutes later.

The parking lot was only about a quarter filled and this time of night. The place did not get busy until about nine. She pulled into the area designated for employees, locked the car, and then started for the club's back door.

She went to open the door, and a guy was standing by the door. "Where are you going baby, the party can be starting right here!"

"Stop blocking the door," Blanche said in a lowered voice.

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"You are coming with me whore, you can go work after you take care of me!" he growled.

The idiot attempted to grab her arm; she reached out grabbed his hand, bending it backward and twisting it harshly.

"You bitch" he screamed, clutching his dislocated wrist, "you broke my wrist."

The bouncer hearing the scream, came rushing out the back door, "What the hell is going on?"

Blanche calmly said, "He tried to put his hands on me, and my training took over. I will not have men putting their hands on me without permission."

"I will sue this club and that bitch for attacking me!" the man whimpered as he held his wrist close to his body.

"Go ahead, asshole," the bouncer quietly stated. "I will swear I watched you attack her, and I was too slow to help her. You have two seconds to get out of here before I call the cops myself."

The man looked up at least six inches into the other man's eyes and decided to leave. The bouncer turned and opened the door widely, and stood back.

"Eddie, I would never hurt you," she said pleasantly.

"Just being careful, losing to you would be bad for my image," he said.

She smiled at Eddie as she entered the club, padded his arm, and went straight to the dressing room to get changed. After changing into her "work" clothes, she locked her bag in the locker.

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"Another night of entertaining slobbering idiots," she thought. Then she remembered she had to talk to the boss.

She leaned in the manager's office and told him she would be off at least Friday night and possibly Saturday night. Bob was displeased because she was one of his best draws.

"Must you?" he complained.

"Yes - I am going on a date this weekend," she proudly stated.

"You never date anyone; why now"

"Because I met a special man," and without another word, turned and entered the club to work and make money.